BEN GREET TO HIS CRITICS.

GRIEVES THAT THEY SHOULD KNOW SO LITTLE.

Talks of Elizabethan Stage and Morality Plays, but Every Now and Then Returns to the Subject of the Critics—How His "Macbeth" Was Got Into Shape.

If any one thinks that Ben Greet does not use scenery, "props" and other appurtenances appertaining to the production of the works of one William Shakespeare, let the scoffer try to reach the said Ben Greet's dressing room by the route that lies behind the stage and he will change his mind.

The path lies through, by and among many bits of canvas, spears, a ton or so of thunder, lightning to burn, plenty of wind and a kitchen full of witch's utensils, so that you can't help wondering how Mr Greet ever got the reputation of carrying all the costumes and belongings for his productions in a suit case.

Even his dressing room has none of the ascetic appearance that would harmonize with his rather clerical appearance, and the walls, screens and doors are papered and peppered with the latest flings from the critics.

And no matter how many devious paths you may have traversed in finding Mr. Greet, there is only one that he will allow you to wander in under his supervision—that is the path of retaliation, for he asserts that he feels that he has been misunderstood and misrepresented by the majority of dramatic critics.

Before taking the button off his foil, however, and making his first lunge Mr. Greet gives a few managerial notes concerning the performance of "Macbeth."

"Very few works of Shakespeare," says Mr. Greet, "have been so badly mauled by the play adapter. The object of this representation is to show the work, however inadequately, as a dramatic and literary masterpiece. The play is undoubtedly a fine vehicle for modern stage effects, provided its dignity is not made subservient to limelight and machinery. The tragedy of 'Macbeth' was first acted in 1606 and first printed authentically in 1623. Dr. Simon Forman's MS. diary, preserved in the Ashmolean Museum, states that he saw 'Macbeth' acted at the Globe Theatre April 20, 1610. Samuel Pepys was so fond of the play that he writes of having seen it some dozen times in five years, 1664-69.

"NOW IS THE WINTER OF OUR DISCONTENT."

"Myriads of commentators have imputed all sorts of motives to Shakespeare and the court of King James I. (James VI. of Scotland) in writing this play. It is declared that it was written to order and partly in revenge for the death of Mary Stuart, the King's mother, during the reign of Elizabeth.

"All material required for the play is derived from *Holinshed's Chronicles*. Sixty lines are omitted; there are three or four intervals.

"In regard to the scenery, the first recorded use of painted scenery in England was a cloth representing the sun, used in a court masque, 1633, but a piece of painted canvas is used in this representation for one of the witch scenes.

"The greater part of the music performed in "Macbeth" consists of sixteenth century Scotch tunes taken from the Straloch manuscript, now preserved in the Advocate's Library, in Edinburgh. The original music of the songs 'Come Away' and 'Black Spirits' being lost, Arnold Dolmetsch has written new settings for this performance in the style of the time of the play.

"The words of the songs are the same as those used by Thomas Middleton in 'The Witch,' written about the same time.

"The care in research and detail shown in 'Macbeth,' continues Mr. Greet, dropping the managerial manner for a while, "are paralleled by that represented in every one of the other plays given by us.

"One of the New York critics called our costumes 'threadbare.' I honestly don't know what he expected to see—bright pinks and yellows and reds, possibly. What he did see were costumes absolutely accurate, so far as human ability could show them, and costumes on which neither time, money nor patience was economized. The 'Macbeth' costumes are not magnificent, they could not represent the time and place if they were like those, say of 'Romeo and Juliet,' 'Merchant of Venice' and 'Twelfth Night.' It was a rough time, and in the faded tapestries on the wall, the battle stained garments, the primitive weapons and appliances, you see the Scotland of the day, not that of the fevered imagination of a spectacular minded manager.

"In regard to the protests that I don't use 'scenery,' which has led many people to believe that I give my representations in bare, whitewashed interiors, I do not use scenery in the sense that a curtain with an advertisement or an assurance that it is made of asbestos, drops down every few moments, nor do I use the modern shifting scenery that is familiar to the playgoer of to-day; but so far as possible I represent the stage effects of Shakespeare's time.

"The critics, noting with wonderful acumen, that I have merely put the names of the characters of the plays, without the usual names of the actors and actresses following, have assumed that there could be but one reason for this. One of them said he didn't blame me for not mentioning their names, because they were all amateurs, and another asks who ever heard of So-and-So and So-and-So—names known for years to English playgoers, but not here, of course.

"Some of the men and women in the Players have been with me for more than ten years. All of them have been selected for a special gift of voice or style and, above all, for enthusiasm, without which not even criticism is ever rightly accomplished.

"Personally I do not believe that all the critics combined will make one single person go to a theatre who does not want to see that particular play, but I do think that a concensus of adverse criticism must have a pernicious, deterrent effect upon the public mind. It isn't in human nature to hold fast to a faith without some sort of indorsement. I don't think it is fair at all for people who are trying to do serious work to be treated in this flippant way.

"And don't critics know that in critising us in this way they are holding up to ridicule the men who are authorities on these matters and from whom are constantly coming letters of encouragement and approval? There is scarcely a college president who has not given us this word of approval, not a student of recognized authority in the field of Shakespeariana. For instance, Dr. Furniss, one of the greatest Shakespearian scholars in the world, wrote me that he never enjoyed a performance of Shakespeare as he had mine, that they were 'illuminating'; Dr. Woodrow Wilson has continually written to ask us to come again to Princeton—we have been there already six or seven times—and now he extends an open invitation to come at any time when we can; Dr. Alderman of the University of Virginia, Prof. Moulton of Chicago, Prof. Schelling of the University of Pennsylvania, who has made the most exhaustive study of Shakespeare in this country; Prof. Phelps of Yale, have been equally and consistently enthusiastic.

BEN GREET TELLING HIS PLAYERS TO BE NATURAL.

"I had at one time and the London *Times* took up the matter with the suggestion that a memorial theatre for the production of the Elizabethan dramas be built near the old White Friars Theatre. One gentleman offered to subscribe ten thousand pounds, but then interest dropped. I think it is just as well. Any theatre is adaptable to these productions or can be made so and here your people who correspond to what we call the upper classes are too faddy, I believe, to care for a continuous establishment of this kind. In Chicago they got as far as to talk about a serious scheme of the kind, but the knowledge that there was to be a committee frightened me away. One is always glad of suggestions, but a manager, I mean a showman, cannot be dictated to.

"Another critic," exclaims Mr. Greet, interrupting himself; "yes, you must wait to hear about this one—had this to say about 'Everyman,' which will close our New York production. His statement—and he is a dean of critics—was that 'Everyman' was discovered by Miss Wynne Matthewson.

"The revival of 'Everyman,' after a lapse of 300 years, was brought about by the Elizabethan Stage Society and Miss Douglas Reynolds first took the title role. Up to that time and her own engagement, I do not believe that Miss Matthewson had even read it. Abuse of the most scurrilous order was heaped upon it at first, but in this instance certainly adverse criticism could not hurt. The first night we opened to less than $50, but before the end of the week we were playing to capacity houses.

"Before we came here productions were given in the old Charter House of London, in the quadrangle of University College, Oxford, and at Rugby and other schools.

"The first impression of 'Everyman' is traceable to the year 1529, but there is good reason to believe it was in manuscript as early as the reign of Edward IV. An edition of the play was published early in the reign of Henry VIII., when it was evidently popular and often presented. It was at one time produced in Latin under the name of 'Homulus,' by an author of uncertain identity. This 'Homulus' was supposed to have been adapted by one of the abbots toward the end of the fifteenth century, while the thread of the story we are told is to be found in the religious romance of Balaam and Jehoshaphat, ascribed to John of Damascus, who died in 1090. The little book that we use is got up very carefully from the black letter copy of Lincoln. Very few lines of the original have been omitted, and in one short scene there is a slight transpostition of speeches.

"The scenery, so called, is copied from an old print of a monastery, especially the cloistered part—such plays as this being presented in churches, in parts of religious houses and at times even in the streets. The costumes are copied from Flemish tapestries. The little music introduced is that of the long ago by Adam de la Halle and Jacques Arkadelt. One tiny verse attributed to Shakespeare is sung The accessories of the stage are symbolical. The flowers denote cultivation of the soil, the little organ, art; the wheels, work; the cushions, rest after labor; and the candles, worship and thanks due. The characters, entering when possible from the audience, speak often in monotne, especially those representing abstractions, that being the primitive style of delivery. Those representing actual human types are allowed a little license of the stage.

"The third and last stage in the development of mediæval religious drama was the enforcement of moral truths, not by Scriptural or legendary history but by the speech and action of allegorical characters, each typifying abstract virtues or qualities, and this was the morality play 'Everyman.'

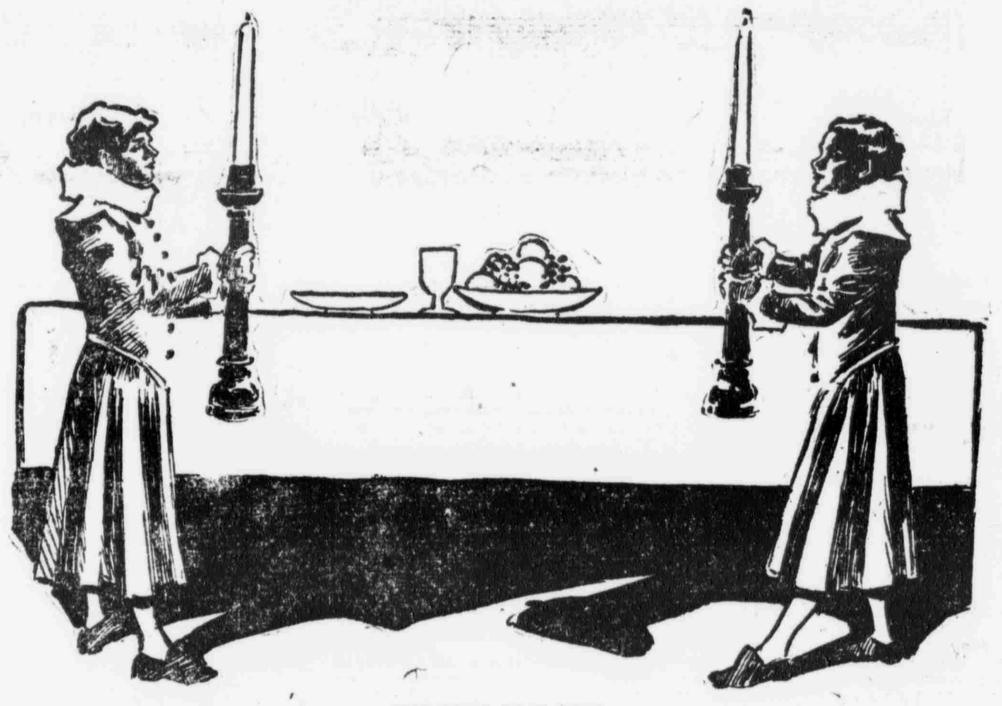
PRECIOUS IRVING COSTUMES.

"Speaking of critics," says Mr. Greet in conclusion, "I see nothing before me but the spotlight. It is yawning for me. I have tried to avoid it, but I feel my powerlessness. I have received three serious offers to go into vaudeville, and if the intellectual people don't want me, why not go to those who are not usually considered intellectual?

"Capsules of Shakespeare of twenty minutes length.

"But before I go I shall give a farewell performance of Shakespeare as the critics want it. I shall print on my announcement 'As you like it,' in very small letters so it will not obtrude itself on the sight and 'with scenery,' so you can read it half a mile away."

NONE BUT THE COLLEGIANS APPRECIATES SHAKESPEARE.



THE BLUE COAT BOYS.

SEARCHING LONDON FOR A BUTTON.

ALL KINDS OF MAGIC ON SALE.

THE BLACK ART AS IT IS PRACTISED IN NEW YORK.

A Magician's House Uptown—To Easy Street via a Black Radish—An Elopement Prevented—The Cabalistic Magic of the East Side—Plenty of Patrons.

All varieties of magic are to be bought in Manhattan, that is if one knows where to find the magicians. This is not always easy, for some of them, so far from advertising, surround themselves with mystery.

One who lives in a street in the Hundreds near where it is cut off by the abrupt rocky height of Morningside Park has in his window a card announcing an ordinary vocation, which answers its purpose of misleading the curious. The house is in no way different from those in the row of which it is one, so far as the external appearance is concerned, but the interior is not duplicated perhaps within the boundary of Greater New York.

In the first room there are big triangles suspended from the ceiling, some of them oddly covered. There are magnets in singular and varied forms; unusual brasiers, in which something is always burning; large and small crystals so placed that they form strange figures; a table the top of which is covered with squares in all the colors of the prism, and among these and other unusual objects in this room persons of consenting imagination declare that they have often seen strange figures moving.

Beyond this there is a room that is dark, very dark, which no one enters save those who at certain times assist the magician in doing what he calls special work. In these rooms and throughout the house the air is heavy with a mixed fragrance, which is not always the same, as it is declared that the evoking of different potencies requires various kinds of incense.

There are strange stories told of what the person who presides in this house has done for his patrons, and the way he has done it. The first thing he said to one man who came to him for help and who had not been able for a long time to succeed in any of his undertakings was:

"I can do nothing for you until you have your bad luck buried and your good luck planted."

He then directed the man whose luck was against him to bring a black radish, a fresh carrot and other things to him on a certain day. When at the appointed time the man seeking help handed the magician a monstrous black radish, the evoker of unseen powers, looking at it in consternation, exclaimed:

"I never saw anything like that before. Where in the world did you get a radish of that size?"

"At Washington Market. The fellow I bought it of said I could have my pick for a nickel, and I'm generally up to taking as much as I can get for my money."

"You've got it this time, all right; but this black radish happens to be your bad luck and you'll not get clear of it until this radish has decayed, and it'll take a year or more to rot the thing. I'll bury it the best I can, and nature 'll take its course; but don't go back home the way you came, nor, after this, do things the way you have been doing them.

"When you go out walk in an opposite direction from the way you took in coming here, and after this don't try to get the best of every bargain. Give the other fellow a chance, and he, or some one else, will let you have easy innings now and then.

"The forces that folks don't see work this way: When a man grabs all he can get all the time he calls the potencies of that kind to him; gets in among them, and then he wonders why he can't hold on to anything and is down on his luck.

"I'll do what I can for you, and if you will obey orders, in a year, or perhaps a little longer, you'll be on Easy street."

Within a year a relative left this man a legacy. With a friend he undertook some suburban tunnel work and within two years he found himself, as the magician had said he would be, on Easy street.

Nothing now could convince him that the turn in his affairs was not due to magic. To reenforce his experience this man relates other things done by his magician.

One of these stories is that the wife of an acquaintance came to him in great distress, saying that her husband, who was preparing to go to Europe, was going to take with him a young woman they both knew. The couple had two children and the wife was not only devoted to her husband, but they had lived very happily together.

There could be no doubt of the facts in the case, as a young man in the husband's office, whom as a boy the wife had befriended, had brought her letters the young woman had written to her husband. After hearing her story, the man who tells about it advised her to go to the magician, and to him she went in all haste.

The evoker of forces unseen said as there was so little time—the husband was to sail within two days—only forces of a low order could be utilized, and that the wife must spend the night in assisting him in the magical work which would be necessary. Giving her a powder which she was to scatter in the bed her husband was to occupy, he directed that as soon as her husband was sleeping she should come to him.

When the wife returned, the magician was at work brewing herbs and essences over a fire in the cellar of his house. All night he worked without speaking save to direct the woman.

In the early dawn he sent her home, telling her that she would find her husband ill, to send for a doctor and to intercept any letter he might attempt to send. He assured her that in a few days her husband would be quite well, and that then the magnetic spell which the young woman had cast over him would be broken.

The woman found her husband suffering from extreme nausea and with a very high temperature. It was a week before he was able to leave the house. Meanwhile, the young woman, expecting until the last moment that he would join her, had no choice but to sail alone. If any explanation was ever attempted it was not successful and the friendship between the two was never resumed.

Another story told by this same man is of a young woman at one time employed as a private secretary, who fell on evil times, and who when everything seemed against her attempted suicide. Being thwarted, she was induced to consult the magician.

First he put her within a circle of magnets in the room, which is utterly dark. Here, so she reports, there appeared to her an apparition which made plain to her what she could accomplish if she would but continue persistent effort, even though she seemingly made no progress.

She then began to desire to live and achieve, and her confidence in her success was reenforced by the assurance of the man of magic that by means of powers which he would evoke, within six months she would be in circumstances agreeable to her. She is now in Philadelphia, happy, prosperous and paying a regular stipend to the magician for continuing his good offices in her favor.

It is customary to classify magic as black or white—that is, good or bad—according as it is used for purposes evil or the reverse, but those magicians who work according to cabalistic methods do not accept this simple definition. They assert that a good aim cannot dignify and make advisable an evil deed.

In a little street which does not go beyond the big company of pushcart people under Williamsburg Bridge, at the rear of a black old tenement, lives a man who pretends to practise white magic, the magic of the cabala. Unlike the uptown worker in the same line, he will not undertake to serve all who come. Those who are not deemed worthy by the angel through whose intermediary powers he pretends to work must go their way, and to the other man if they choose.

Again, unlike the uptown man, he does not ask a fixed price. Every human need, from the most exacting to the most trivial, is brought to him, with the hope that he will make good in some way. Those who have nothing but their needs are faithfully served, but those who stand possessed of this world's goods are made to feel that they must contribute, and liberally.

These last are by no means lacking, for while those who live in the vicinity of the cabalistic magician would not, if they could, seek the services of the uptown magician, many from the more fashionable quarter of New York come to the Hebrew man of magic and others of his ilk.

These last seek him to be healed of their diseases, helped in their undertakings or instructed. Often instruction is thrust upon those who come for other purposes, as a means to an end. They are assured that to gain their desires it is necessary for them to make themselves deserving of the help they are seeking.

In giving such instruction this cabalistic magician explains that, while all help comes from the one source, it comes through various channels. There are departments and officers in the government of heaven as there are in earthly government, and one must know how to apply and to whom in making his requests.

He professes to understand this. To make the application a success often involves long magical ceremonies, which not infrequently include many waking night hours, fasting and prayer.

In addition to this the person seeking help is assured that even an angel commanding hosts of heaven may not be the bearer of a petition which is not wholly free from the dross of selfish evil intent, and that should an angel undertake such a mission he would himself become stained and impotent until a long purification had been fulfilled.

Often patrons of this magician are required to commit to memory the names of many angels, together with the office of each. There is no angel, so he says, controlling everything under the sun, as, for instance, each day in the week and each hour in the day. In addition to the names of certain angels they also frequently learn many of the different names by which the Deity is called, and are told that each of these names has a magical significance and is to be used under different circumstances. All this is to fit the applicant to receive such material benefits in this life as health, wealth and happiness.

The regular pupils of the cabalistic magician are in due time taught the mystic significance and power of the Psalms. It is asserted by him and other cabalists that each one of the Psalms has a potency peculiar to it, provided it is said in the right way and at the right time.

For example, one who has been unlucky in all that he has undertaken, in spite of his best efforts, is directed to pray the fourth psalm, with humility and devotion, three times each morning before the rising of the sun. After praying the Psalm, with equal devotion and perfect faith he is to pray as follows:

"May it please Thee, O Jiheje, to prosper my ways, steps and doings. Grant that my desires may be amply fulfilled and let my wishes be satisfied, even this day, for the sake of Thy great, mighty and praiseworthy name, Amen. Selah." The name Jiheje, means, "He is and will be," and it is charged that when this prayer and Psalm is being said, this name be kept in mind, as it rules this particular invocation.

When this is persisted in each day the cabalistic magician is positive in his assertion that in due time all things will result to the entire satisfaction of the one making use of this Psalm, prayer and name, however much he may be afflicted with contrary conditions.

Almost every happening in life is provided for by a combination of some one of the Psalms, a prayer which accompanies it and a name which signifies some particular attribute of the Deity. From a headache to a lawsuit, remedy, so it is said, may be found in some one of them.

Speaking of a lawsuit, it is asserted that he who prays the Thirty-fifth Psalm in the early morning for three days in succession may expect to win his case, always provided that his is a just contention. As to headache, the third psalm is recommended, and it is to be said over olive oil While the Psalm and the prayer are being repeated it is directed that the back of the head be anointed with the oil.

When, happily, the request has been granted the last Psalm is to be repeated many times and with unction, and if the testimony of those who have sought the aid of cabalistic magicians is to be accepted there are many who offer up this prayer over and over again. These and others relating to benefits they have received to friends and acquaintances incite them to hasten to obtain similar help. In this way men and women, rich and poor, learned and illiterate, recruit the following of men of magic, whatever the kind, here in New York.

Murderer Got Away.

From the Boston Herald.

On a recent Sunday night a murder was committed in a town not far from Boston. The chief of police, after an hour's examination, left the search for the murderer to an assistant on the ground that he needed a long night's sleep in order to be around early for the town meeting the next day.

The murderer has not been found.

IT ISN'T WHAT WE DO.

But the Way We Do It That Counts—With Illustrations by Mr. Mufleby.

"A wise man has said that it isn't what we do that counts, but the way we do it and how true that is," said Mr. Mufleby, "and in how many ways!

"I heard a man saying only yesterday of another that we both knew that this man didn't go around knocking everything, but was always cheerful, and I couldn't help thinking how true that was of him, and of how it helped him, and how it helped everybody around him.

"He is an able chap, this man, and prosperous; he can do things, and still with him, as it is with so many of us, it isn't so much what he does that counts, as it is the way he does it. People cotton to him and like to deal with him, and he's getting on.

"And as to all the various relations of life: Isn't a little favor graciously bestowed upon us by a man who is giving us all he can more grateful to us than a big one given grudgingly or with an ill grace? Sure enough.

"Why, the way we do it can make dull things gay, turn a trolley car into an automobile and make a scanty or homely board hospitable and pleasing. I have eaten dinners of the simplest foods that were more delightful far than others of the grandest, because of the finer grace with which the simpler offering was pervaded.

"We are so apt to go wrong about that, for instance; to think that we can't compete with people of a thousand times more means, and so not try. What's the use? we say. We can't do anything with what we've got, why should we try to do anything?

"A worse mistake it would be impossible to make. Let us not think ill of ourselves, or of our hospitality. True, a mackerel is not a shad, nor is stone china fine porcelain; but is that any reason why we shouldn't make the best of what we have and put a smiling face on it?

"And ours may in truth be the more enjoyable entertainment. A generous welcome will make mackerel salmon and turn stone china into ware of Sèvres, in the taste and fancy of the guest. One need not have tapestried walls if his hearth fire burn bright.

"Let us all take heart! In whatever we may do it is not what we do but the way we do it that counts!"